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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-eighth year

Letter dated 6 August 1993 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement dated 4 August 1993 by the Government of the Russian Federation concerning nuclear weapons in Ukraine (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex distributed as an official document of the General Assembly under item 71 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Y. VORONTSOV

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Annex

STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Kiev recently took a number of steps to establish control over the nuclear weapons situated in Ukrainian territory. On 2 July 1993 the Ukrainian parliament endorsed a document entitled "Basic trends in the foreign policy of Ukraine", in which Ukraine declares itself as having ownership of those weapons. This act of parliament was supported in subsequent public utterances by the Ukrainian leadership. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defence adopted a decision to incorporate the troops responsible for the storage and use of nuclear munitions into the 43rd Rocket Army, which is under its command. Ukraine thereby establishes direct control over nuclear weapons.

In this connection, the Government of the Russian Federation finds it necessary to state the following.

Such a course of action by Kiev, which is a matter of concern to the world, will have extremely serious consequences for international stability and security and for the entire system of international relations.

By declaring itself the possessor of nuclear weapons, Ukraine is violating the international commitments undertaken by it with regard to its non-nuclear status, and thereby posing an open challenge to international law and order and sowing the seeds of legal nihilism in international relations.

Kiev is directly violating a number of agreements concluded under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States, including the decision taken by the Commonwealth heads of State on 6 July 1992 under which, of the States successors to the former USSR, only the Russian Federation shall possess nuclear weapons.

Ukraine is also violating the Lisbon Protocol to the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT I), under which it undertook as a non-nuclear-weapon State to accede at the earliest possible date to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In a written declaration made by Ukraine at the time of signing that Protocol, it stated that "... the right to possess and the burden of possessing, the nuclear weapons belonging to the former USSR, with the explicit consent of Ukraine and all the other States successors to the former USSR, have been reserved exclusively for the Russian Federation".

Kiev's course of action also does not tally with the commitment undertaken by Ukraine with regard to the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from its territory so that they can be dismantled and destroyed by the end of 1994.

The existing regime for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons based on the 1968 Treaty is being undermined, and that very Treaty, the fate of which will be determined at the Conference in 1995, is in jeopardy. This is setting a dangerous precedent which may be exploited by countries on the threshold of possessing nuclear weapons.

The results of many years of effort by the international community to achieve nuclear disarmament have been torpedoed, and especially the START I and START II Treaties.

Since Ukraine does not possess the appropriate physical, technical and technological facilities, its assumption of control over nuclear weapons significantly heightens the risk relating to nuclear and environmental security, the entire responsibility for which lies unquestionably with Ukraine.

The Russian Federation, as the sole successor to the USSR in respect of the possession of nuclear weapons, and as the depositary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, cannot recognize as legitimate any claims or actions which run athwart international understandings concerning the preservation and strengthening of the regime for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We call on Ukraine to take all measures to ensure strict compliance with its non-nuclear status as provided for in international agreements, and to review the above-mentioned decisions by the parliament and Ministry of Defence of Ukraine for establishing control over nuclear weapons.

At the same time, the Russian Federation expresses its readiness to continue to cooperate with Ukraine in ensuring the physical and environmental security of nuclear weapons on the basis of the provisions contained in the message dated 30 April 1993 from the President of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin, addressed to the President of Ukraine.